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ABSTRACT

This "feature issue" focuses on transition from school to adult life for persons with disabilities. Included are "success stories," brief program descriptions, and a list of resources. Individual articles include the following titles and authors: "Transition: An Energizing Concept" (Paul Bates); "Transition Issues for the 1990s" (William Halloran and Deborah R. Henderson); "Transition in the 90s: One Graduate's Success Story" (Diane Bisping); "Minnesota: A Leader in Transition" (David R. Johnson and Stephanie Corbey); "Minnesota Models Transition Planning" (Sandy Thompson); "Leisure Transition" (Tip Ray and Rich Burke); "Retention and Transition in Postsecondary Vocational Education" (James M. Brown); "Successful Rural Vocational Transition" (Bob Vaadeland); "Transition Tips for Teachers" (Sandy Thompson); "Four Faces of Successful Transition" (Stephanie Corbey); "Evaluation of Outcomes in Transition Programs" (Lizanne DeStefano); "The Next Step: Using Follow-Up Information To Guide Transition Planning" (Mary Fox Sinclair and others). Also included is an annotated list of 12 print and media resources on transition. (DB)

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INSTITUTE ON COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

IMPACT

Feature Issue on Transition

Volume 3(3) Fall, 1990

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Transition: An Energizing Concept

by Paul Bates

During the 1980s, transition emerged as one of the top priorities of the federal Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). The Education for the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1983 (PL 98-199) authorized a grants initiative to support research and development of transition planning activities. More recently, transition has been defined as a required service within draft versions of 1990 Amendments to the Education for the Handicapped Act. At this time it appears virtually certain that transition will become permanently embedded within the standard operating procedures for special education, rehabilitation, and other human service systems.

Tracey Beaulieu, a 1989 graduate, has made a successful transition from school to the world of adult life. See story on page 3.

Although it is important to understand the contribution of federal leadership to the evolution of transition as one of the "buzz words" and program priorities of the 1980s, it is more important to realize that transition has long been an issue of significance to persons with disabilities and their families. These consumers have experienced personally the painful disappointments of seeing their hopes and dreams fade as a result of limited opportunity and lack of program coordination. Transition will continue to be an issue of critical significance to these individuals long after the "buzz" fades and federal priorities shift. Transition is not a passing fad. It is an opportunity to focus attention on the many challenges that must be addressed for persons with disabilities to develop rewarding lifestyles of community inclusion. To take full advantage of the opportunity that transition provides, it is important to examine several developments and issues that have emerged around this concept. Specifically, in this article transition definitions are discussed, legislative developments are summarized, critical issues are highlighted, and "best practice" principles are identified.

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From the Editors:

Just a few years ago many students with disabilities were viewed as "eternal children" and taught to perform meaningless tasks, resulting in little or no demonstration of their personal capacities for independent and productive adult lives. Today, transition, the process of preparing young people for future employment and community living, is a high priority across this nation. Today we speak increasingly of the importance of outcomes students can and should experience through their participation in educational programs. Parents have become more active partners in educational planning and decision making on behalf of their children. Public policies have evolved, promoting the fundamental principles of community integration, personal productivity, and independence for individuals with disabilities. This issue of IMPACT stresses the positive actions underway to enhance the quality of adult life for youth with disabilities. We feel it is important to fully acknowledge the progress and successes of those who have had a part in promoting this changing climate. We sincerely thank the many individuals and agencies who have taken the time to contribute to this important issue of IMPACT.

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A report from the Institute on Community Integration, a University Affiliated Program, located at the University of Minnesota. Dedicated to improving community services and social support for persons with disabilities and their families.

Transition Issues for the 1990s

by William Halloran and Deborah R. Henderson

The 1970s was a decade of focus on special education issues characterized by concerns with equal access for all students with disabilities, appropriate education conducted in the least restrictive environment, individualized educational planning, and due process assurances under the law for special education students and their parents. Follow-up studies conducted in the early 1980s revealed that despite this emphasis on equality, integration, and independence seen in P.L. 94-142 and other legislation, large numbers of special education students leaving public education were entering segregated, dependent, non-productive lives. These findings, along with concern on the part of parents, professionals, and policymakers, gave rise to the issues of the remainder of the 1980s: early intervention, transition from school to work, maximum participation in regular education, family networking, and follow-up/follow-along responsibilities. These issues expanded the role and responsibility of public education to younger and older age groups. They also emphasized the importance of developing relationships between the school and elements of the community, such as families, employers, adult service agencies, and social services. While the seventies stressed accountability through increased documentation and litigative resources, the eighties' emphasis shifted toward assessing real life outcomes associated with special education. Education agencies began to identify adult adjustment goals for their students in the areas of postsecondary education, employment, and independent living; to plan educational programs and work experiences to achieve those goals; and to follow-up graduates and school leavers in an effort to gauge the effectiveness of school programming.

The issues of the nineties, like those of the eighties, reflect an extension or elaboration of those of the previous decade. We have identified four transition issues for the 1990s: self-determination, secondary curriculum reform, public policy alignment, and anticipated service needs. Each issue is presented briefly here in an effort to assist policymakers and professionals to build an action plan for the next decade.

Self Determination: Education's Ultimate Goal

Issues of independence, self-sufficiency, and informal decision-making capacity are emerging in rehabilitation and education literature as essential attributes for successful community integration of persons with disabilities. The ultimate goal of education is to increase each student's responsibility for managing their own affairs. Actualizing this goal would require a major change in our approach to educating, parenting, and planning for children and youth with disabilities. Reform aimed at self determination would distribute the responsibility for learning and performance as shared among teachers, parents, and the student, with primary control remaining with the student.

Secondary Curriculum Reform: Completing the Initial Transition

Transitions should be perceived as a "right of passage" for all youth with disabilities leaving public school programs. If we believe it is a right, we must advocate a major change in educational practices for youth with disabilities. The goal of special education programs should be to prepare individuals with disabilities to live and work in their communities. This major change in focus will expand the role of education from preparing individuals for transition to include making the initial placement in appropriate community settings with sufficient time for "follow-along" before school exit. The measure of effectiveness of secondary special education programs should be the quality of community life experienced after exiting school.

Public Policy Alignment: Supporting Education Efforts

The commitment to integration and the provision of transition services necessitate a redirection of our secondary special education programs to ensure that all youth with disabilities have the opportunity to become well-adjusted suitably employed members of their communities. As our education efforts become more focused on programming for future environments, the need for adjustments in current policy or procedures will become apparent. We have already identified three areas of policy which will need adjusting: graduation/high school completion, compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. The graduation/high school completion issues should be aimed at continuing to engage or to re-engage graduates or dropouts in responsive programs until successful transitions are completed. Utilization of community work sites as educational environments has raised conflict between schools and the U.S. Department of Labor, who is responsible for ensuring that individuals with disabilities are not being exploited in the work place. The Fair Labor Standards Act allows training in community worksites, but a clear understanding of when and under what conditions needs to be articulated. Recent changes in the SSI program have incentives that can provide needed support for individuals to live and work in the community.

Educators and families must acquire a working knowledge of these entitlements and how they may be applied.

Anticipated Service Needs: Waiting Lists for Adult Services

Deinstitutionalization and the mandate for free, appropriate public education have led to an implied promise of responsive community-based adult services. This implication is false! The vast majority of students with more severe disabilities are leaving school and joining ever expanding waiting lists with little hope of timely placements in responsive programs. Families, educators, and adult service providers must develop strategies to work together to improve this untenable situation.

These four issues build upon the ideas of equal access, independence, and integration that have been central to special education policy in the last two decades. In the nineties, however, these ideas may reach new levels of actualization as students are placed in positions to influence their own learning and its outcomes. As secondary curricula and policy acknowledge the importance of vocational and independent living competencies as well as academic competencies, community networks of schools, adult service agencies, employers, families, and friends will need to communicate and advocate for efficient, integrated service provision. Leadership at all levels is necessary to address these issues. If provided, the 1990s could hold special significance in the history of special education.

Dr. William Halloran is a Research Specialist with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. Deborah R. Henderson is a doctoral intern at the U.S. Department of Education and a Secondary Transition Specialist with the San Benito county WorkAbility Project in Hollister, California.

Transition in the 90s: One Graduate's Success Story

by Diane Bisping

I went to visit an old friend, Tracey, the other day. I hadn't seen her for at least a year. How the time does fly. When I arrived at her apartment building, she met me at the door with a big smile and a robust hug. We entered her apartment and instantly I felt the warmth of the people she lived with—soft billowy couches, a picture of garden flowers hung on the wall, a wicker basket carefully arranged with silk flowers. She introduced me to a friend named Chris, the counselor who comes to her apartment every evening to share dinner with Tracey and her roommates and to help advise with the cooking chores. While we all sat at the kitchen table and began to talk about Tracey's accomplishments, I couldn't help but think back on all the people in Tracey's life that helped her get to this point.

Tracey graduated from Intermediate School District 916's Community Integrated Education program in 1989 at age 21. This program originated to prepare people with developmental disabilities for more independent adult lives. While she was there, her teachers, assistants, work trainers and work coordinators spent time with Tracey teaching her skills in cooking, cleaning, laundry, transportation, leisure, vocations, and many more. As a work trainer I remember working with her at a hotel in the housekeeping department, teaching her responsibility and what it meant to complete a job to the establishment's standards. She struggled at times with accepting her limitations and understanding the boundaries that existed in her life.

As we sat reminiscing, the phone rang. Tracey answered, and of course it was for her. She politely informed the person that she had a guest over and she'd call them back. After an hour of visiting with Tracey this would happen three other times. There was one skill neither teachers or trainers needed to promote with Tracey and that was her ability to socialize and have a variety of friends. "Everyone likes Tracey," admits Shirley Beaulieu, Tracey's mother. "When Tracey comes home on the weekends she has company from Friday night to Sunday night." Tracey's humorous personality and inviting smile draw people to her and open opportunities for her. That's one of her strengths that helps her create her own successes. Her family background is another.

Tracey comes from a large family that has always seen her as a whole person, recognizing her strengths as well as her limitations. They are a family that placed expectations on her and didn't allow her to sit back and let others do things for her. Tracey even participates in the family owned business, doing her part of helping in the restaurant. This has taught her responsibility and what it means to contribute as a member of a team.

Teamwork has been an important factor in Tracey's success. One of her high school teachers recalled the IEP meetings where the team members discussed the idea of semi-independent living as a possibility for Tracey. Tracey's social worker was one of the team that paved the

Tracey, continued on page 19

Minnesota: A Leader in Transition

by David R. Johnson and Stephanie Corbey

Since the mid 1980's, Minnesota's educational and community service agencies have emerged as leaders in making available the highest quality programs and services for youth with disabilities who are making the transition from school programs to adulthood. This has largely been achieved through three levels of activity: development of supporting state policies and legislation, state and community-level interagency cooperation and planning, and demonstrations of effective transition service practices that serve as models within the state and elsewhere in the nation.

Minnesota Legislation and State Policies

In 1983, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, identified transition from school to work as one of the major federal policy priorities of special education programs across the nation. The extent to which individual states have developed paralleling and supportive policies to bring about needed changes in the delivery of transition services has varied widely across the country. Minnesota's state and local education and community service agencies have been firmly committed to the notion that improvements in transition services can only result from systematic statewide planning and policy development that clearly articulates the direction for needed changes. Minnesota is one of few states in the nation to take formal policy and legislative steps to support transition programming and interagency planning on a statewide basis. The collective achievements to date are exemplified by several recent developments.

Formation of a State Transition Interagency Committee.

Initiated in 1984, the State Transition Interagency Committee was established to ensure that state and local agencies work together to develop a system of services so that all Minnesotans with disabilities have the opportunity to live and work in the community as independently as possible. This committee, composed of 15 independent state agencies, consumer organizations, and parents, regularly convenes to plan and share ideas on ways to improve the delivery of transition services for students at the time of transition. The State Transition Interagency Committee is committed to three central goals that guide state leadership activities:

- Improve service planning and coordination for individuals.
- Form multi-disciplinary interagency planning teams at the school and community levels to facilitate transition from school to postsecondary education, employment, and community living.
- Continue ongoing statewide planning and develop policies, standards, practices, and funding mechanisms to create an equitable system of community-based transition services.

A formal interagency agreement has been developed and is reviewed annually.

Establishment of the Interagency Office on Transition Services.

In 1985, the Minnesota State Legislature established the Interagency Office on Transition Services within the Unique Learner Needs Section of the Minnesota Department of Education. The Interagency Office on Transition Services is an outgrowth of the recognition that a central resource was needed to build professional and public awareness and orchestrate improvements in transition services statewide. To this end, the office is charged with the responsibility of assisting Minnesota education and community service agencies in establishing local interagency agreements, providing training and technical assistance to professionals, and disseminating information on exemplary program standards and practices. The Interagency Office on Transition Services works closely with the State Transition Interagency Committee in planning and coordinating program improvement activities.

Passage of Transition Legislation.

In 1987, the Minnesota State Legislature affirmed the importance of improving transition services statewide and passed supporting legislation. This legislation stresses the importance of interagency cooperation and improved strategies for planning for individual students with disabilities. As enacted, these statues:

- Create Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) in Minnesota for the purpose of community-based transition planning to meet the needs of individuals in a coordinated fashion. Six statutory requirements are addressed within the law to guide local Interagency Committees (M.S. 120.17 sub.16).
- Require the inclusion of goals addressing the student's needs for transition from secondary services to post-secondary education training, employment, and community living. These goals are to be part of the Individual Education Plan of all students with disabilities at grade nine or age fourteen (M.S. 120.17 sub.17).

In 1989, additional statutory language was added requiring that CTICs meet at least quarterly to fulfill duties prescribed

in the 1987 statute and directing the committees to report annually when requested to summarize progress and make local recommendations (State Board of Education Standards and Procedures 3525.0600, Interagency Committees).

Related Policy Developments.

In addition to the above, the Minnesota Department of Education supports the statewide improvement of transition services through several other activities:

- Requires local school districts and special education cooperatives to report annually on the numbers of youth, by handicapping condition, who are about to exit their special education programs.
- Submits annual reports to the Minnesota Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Minnesota Developmental Disabilities Council on the anticipated numbers of youth with disabilities exiting public school programs.
- Monitors individual education plans to ensure that goals and objectives related to the students' transition from school are included in these plans by 9th grade or age 14.
- Provides a comprehensive system of personnel development to ensure that Minnesota teachers have up-to-date information on educational practices and interagency planning strategies for transition.

Community Level Actions

The 1987 legislation promoting the development of Community Transition Interagency Committees statewide emphasized the important role of local communities in sharing the responsibility for improved transition services. In the two years since the Minnesota Legislature required communities to establish interagency planning committees for transition, more than 70 independent groups have formed statewide. At present, over 1,500 local education and community service agency representatives actively participate on committees. These Community Transition Interagency Committees are guided in their actions and decisions by statutory language directing committees to conduct local needs assessments, share information between agencies, establish community-level action plans, and evaluate ongoing progress in achieving needed empowerments in transition services.

Improving Transition Services Through Training, Technical Assistance, and Research

Through the individual as well as collective efforts of state and local agencies, consumer organizations, and Minnesota's institutions of higher education, a broad range

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Is There Life After High School?

In response to a survey during the late 1970s, one astute director of a developmental achievement center asked with a note of sarcasm and concern, "Is there life after high school?" She saw very few options available for the many students leaving special education programs in her community—little opportunity for advanced education and training, no jobs, low expectations, waiting lists for services—not a bright outlook, indeed.

A recent report by the National Council on Disability entitled, *The Education of Students with Disabilities: Where Do We Stand?: A Report to the President and the Congress of the United States* (September 1989), stated emphatically, "The time has come to ask the same questions for students with disabilities that we have been asking about students without disabilities: Are they achieving? Are they staying in school? Are they prepared to enter the work force when they finish school? Are they going on to participate in postsecondary education and training? Are they prepared for adult life?"

The National Council on Disability recommended that the time has come to shift the focus from the goal of access to public education to quality and student outcomes. When comparing outcome indicators for students with disabilities and indicators for students without disabilities, it was apparent that "students with disabilities aged 16 and over are significantly lagging behind": a) where only 15 percent of all adults age 18 and over have less than a high school education, 40 percent of all persons with disabilities aged 16 and over did not finish high school; b) where the dropout rate is 25 percent for all students, it is 36 percent for students with disabilities; c) where 56 percent of all students participate in postsecondary education programs, only 15 percent of students with disabilities do; and d) while the unemployment rate is about 5 percent nationally, a full 66 percent of all Americans with disabilities between the age of 16 and 64 are not working. The National Council on Disability report concludes, "By any standards, these statistics are not acceptable.... we have a lot of work to do."

Contributed by Roger Strand, Chair of the Minnesota State Transition Interagency Committee and staff member of the Minnesota Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Minnesota Models Transition Planning

by Sandy Thompson

Minnesota has recognized the need for public agencies, families and other concerned citizens to work together to improve support for youth with disabilities as they make the transition from high school to their adult lives. Because of this need, legislation was drafted and passed in Minnesota in 1987 to create Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) throughout the state (MS 120.17 Subd.16). In the three years since the passage of this mandate, 70 independent CTICs have formed to address the transition needs of youth with disabilities. Though each committee contends with their own unique demographic, geographic, and organizational challenges, all are concerned with creating improved local conditions that will enhance students' access to a full range of community opportunities once they leave school.

Education authorities who are responsible for special education services in Minnesota school districts and cooperatives have primary responsibility for setting up CTICs. The statute governing committee formation was proposed and enacted as a special education law and is subject to monitoring by the Minnesota Department of Education. The CTICs were established through the following process:

- Geographic boundaries were defined.
- Committee members were identified.
- Initial meetings were held.
- Leaders were selected.
- Groups were oriented to the transition legislation.
- Committee guidelines or bylaws were established.
- Committee mission statements were developed.

Currently, over half of Minnesota's CTICs have completed their organizational tasks and are addressing issues that affect students with disabilities in their communities. One of the needs committees are addressing is the community's need for information about services. Committees have distributed this information through written service directories, evening events featuring agencies and services, and articles in local media. Two committees have made video productions to show on cable TV and loan out to families. Another need that has been successfully addressed is involvement of students in their own transition planning. Many schools are now offering courses or workshops on self-advocacy through special education or community education in cooperation with other community service agencies.

CTICs do not receive funding for their work, except for state allocations to Special Education. This, along with lack of time to work together as a committee, has presented their primary barrier to effectiveness. As interagency cooperation becomes more of a priority to agencies, these barriers will be overcome. An additional major challenge has been getting members more committed to the mission and process of interagency planning. This, too, will change as committees begin to stand out in the community as leaders in affecting change.

This is the only legislation of its kind in the country. Our struggles are great, but we are paving the way for interagency planning at the community level for the rest of the nation.

Sandy Thompson is Coordinator of the CTIC Technical Assistance Project, a joint project of the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration and the Minnesota Department of Education's Interagency Office on Transition Services. For further information, she may be reached at (612) 625-3863.

Communication Key to CTIC Success

by Rhoda Robinson

Communication was a primary goal for the Duluth Interagency Council when it began in 1985 (renamed the Duluth Transition Interagency Council in 1987). In the schools we were changing the way we taught young people with disabilities and we saw the need to talk and plan with the agencies that would serve our students after graduation. Agencies also saw the need to communicate and plan together — but how?! Many of us had been working in competition rather than cooperation — we all had questions, fears and distrust. As we began meeting, we knew that good communication needed to be our first goal.

Over the first few years, we talked and shared what we each did. We attempted to define needs we all saw and many times efforts seem to be dangerously close to blaming one another for the things that were not getting done. We persevered and just kept talking. In 1986 while attempting to get a supported employment grant for transition students, we realized that we were each thinking of students in transition in different ways. Schools defined them as those in their final two years of school; agencies defined them as recent graduates. Although our words were the same, they referred to different groups! We spent about five months working through definitions around the issue of supported work just so we all meant the same thing with the same words! After five years of meeting together five times a year we are getting better. Our greatest progress is the awareness that language and communication continue to be an issue and we are careful to be as clear as possible — particularly with new people.

Rhoda Robinson is Transition Specialist for the Duluth Public Schools in Duluth, Minnesota.

Leisure Transition

by Tip Ray and Rich Burke

Editor's Note: Often we speak of transition as moving from school to work. But, as we all know, there is more to life than work. The SCOLA program addresses the need for students with disabilities to share in all of the adult life activities offered by their communities.

It's a familiar refrain one hears from parents time and again: "What is there for my child to do after school...on the weekend...during the summer?" Concern about availability of social and recreational opportunities for children of all ages is not uncommon among parents. It is particularly so of parents of teenagers who have severe developmental disabilities. Typically, parents of nonhandicapped teens can expect their children to be quite active: afterschool programs include sports and clubs, and weekends are spent "hanging out" with friends or enjoying the outdoors. Parents of teens with disabilities, on the other hand, must entertain them at home, rely on very limited and typical "special recreation" programs (e.g., bowling), plus struggle with a community and school leisure service system that is not very receptive to or skilled in ways to include these children in leisure programs and opportunities readily available to and frequented by their peers.

SCOLA (School + Community = Opportunities for Leisure Activities) was conceived to address pervasive concerns that social and recreational opportunities in public school and community settings are virtually nonexistent or are inappropriate and inaccessible to teenagers who have severe disabilities. SCOLA focuses on transition-aged youth who attend St. Paul Public Schools. Project activities include: examining the leisure experiences of these teens; providing empowerment training to parents and self-advocates so they can hold providers accountable for accessible service delivery; providing training to leisure professionals on ways to include teens with severe disabilities in typical program offerings; and assisting teens and their families to access preferred leisure activities. The findings from the project will be developed into a comprehensive "guidebook" that will be disseminated statewide and can be used to address similar needs in other schools and communities.

Recreation/leisure has been highlighted as one of the chief components of a student's individual transition plan. This makes sense if one considers that a person's quality of life can be greatly enhanced through meaningful social and recreational experiences. Leisure related issues are often addressed at educational team meetings and are a predominate concern of parents who contact advocacy agencies such as ARC-St. Paul for information about available options. Now that teens with severe disabilities are receiving opportunities to be in home schools and community work sites with their nonhandicapped peers, many advocates are concerned that these teens are not getting adequate opportunities to develop functional competencies that enhance their acceptance in these settings. Leisure participation in school, work, and other community sponsored social and recreational programs is an excellent opportunity to gain skills and behaviors that reflect positively on the person with the disability and can enhance their acceptance.

Integration in leisure settings is a multifaceted process that requires many key players - parents, students with and without disabilities, leisure providers, advocacy groups, employers, school personnel, and others - who meet to jointly plan inclusive models of service. SCOLA has an active advisory council that meets monthly to share perspectives and provide input on leisure integration issues. Member roles and responsibilities are defined and validated with members opening lines of communication necessary to proactively address the leisure needs of teens with severe disabilities. All have learned that the current leisure service system is overly restrictive and is in need of some type of change. Recognizing this fact is already an important outcome of this group!

The St. Paul community seems genuinely receptive to SCOLA assuming a leadership position in addressing the leisure needs of this select group of teenagers. However, getting to a system that is accessible, both physically and socially, is a maze that has yet to be negotiated successfully. Through SCOLA's efforts, key players now have a deeper appreciation for the importance of the issues at hand and are interested in continuing to work together to create a leisure service system more receptive to teens who have severe disabilities.

SCOLA is a project of ARC-St. Paul/Ramsey County and is supported by a grant from the Minnesota Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities. *Tip Ray is Integration Coordinator with ARC-St. Paul and SCOLA Project Director. Rich Burke is SCOLA Recreation Facilitator.*

Further information on community-based leisure activities for persons with disabilities can be found in the fall 1989 issue of IMPACT, which focuses on integrated leisure and recreation options. To obtain a copy call the Institute on Community Integration at (612) 624-4512.

Retention and Transition in Postsecondary Vocational Education

by James M. Brown

Far too few postsecondary vocational education programs have developed effective accommodations for learners with special needs. Prospective students who have disabilities, as well as dislocated workers, displaced homemakers, or other disadvantaged persons, are at the greatest risk of dropping out of school before completing their programs. If post-secondary programs and institutions are going to be an effective facilitator for persons with special needs in transition to the work force, they must first be able to retain those students and adopt a supportive system that fosters their success.

Typically, students entering postsecondary vocational education programs are assessed only in terms of their academic achievement and aptitude levels. As a result, many postsecondary vocational training programs fail to identify and accommodate a wide range of students whose unique learning needs could be corrected, circumvented, or compensated for in order to improve their performance within training programs. It is important that student retention systems consider factors needed for an appropriate match between students and the demands and resources of their training programs. This concept, which can be thought of as person-environment fit, is a key component in the successful transition of persons with special needs from post-secondary vocational programs to the work force.

• Foundations of a Retention System

A comprehensive student-retention system should be based on the following assumptions about "best practices" that can enhance students' transition through vocational training programs and into meaningful, productive careers in the adult workforce:

• Student-retention systems should continuously acknowledge and reconcile program accessibility problems, factors that increase students' likelihood of dropping out, and transition-enhancement processes that provide meaningful preparation and intensive planning for several years prior to the point at which learners with special needs leave school to enter the adult community.

• "Meaningful preparation" efforts should focus on helping students to develop the skills essential to enhancing their subsequent success in terms of academic accomplishments, integration into the adult community, and development of productive career paths.

• Student-retention efforts are substantially more effective if educationally relevant information is collected, analyzed, and applied in a timely manner prior to the emergence of education/training-related problems and/or prior to those problems becoming too severe to accommodate.

• Postsecondary vocational education training programs represent a key component of society's transition resources.

• Current student retention efforts tend to focus primarily on academic skills and overlook the equally important influence of students' attitudes, motivation, sense of responsibility, life experiences, and other affective factors.

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Successful Rural Vocational Transition

by Bob Vaadeland

The Minnesota Valley Cooperative Center and the Granite Falls Public Schools have long been active in the effort to promote the successful transition of students from the school setting into the post-secondary environment. Over the years, this transition effort has taken the form of Employability Skills courses combined with on-the-job work experience. This work experience/employability skills component has become so successful, that during the past year there were more employers requesting work experience students than there were students to fill the positions.

It was evident early on that the educational approach was having a very positive effect, not only on the students with disabilities, but on the community as well. It was also evident that there were several components missing in the transition process that have now been incorporated and are having a major impact on transition planning. These additions include the formation of the Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC) and the development of a Secondary Vocational Laboratory.

Since its formation, the CTIC has written and signed an Interagency Agreement that not only describes services, but also provides details of agency responsibilities. In addition the CTIC has developed a Transition Flow Chart and Interagency Referral Form for interagency use, and has created an Interagency Fair that puts students, teachers, and parents in contact with state and local agencies that can provide transition services.

The Secondary Vocational Laboratory houses not only computer equipment used for assessment and curriculum, but also work stations that

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Transition Tips for Teachers

by Sandy Thompson

The challenges to special education personnel in the transition process are many and require creativity and persistence, along with increased skills in instruction and planning. This article presents some strategies teachers can use to enhance transition planning and services for students with disabilities. The strategies focus on the need for support and involvement from three sources: school administration, community agencies, and families.

Gain administrative support

Change and effective programming cannot come about as a result of teacher effort alone, but must instead rely on larger administrative and policy decisions for basic support. Teachers who attempt to make major changes in an educational system without administrative support may find themselves alienated from colleagues who are resistant to change, and may also find the system backsliding once the teacher leaves because there are no policies to hold the changes in place. Teachers can promote proactive administrative leadership by taking the following steps:

- Include administrators in initial transition planning.
- Inform and educate administrators about transition and best practice successes, possibly by inviting them to a conference or meeting with another administrator who can convince them of the need for transition planning.
- Design creative funding strategies - this means starting small and initiating positive program improvements before requesting dollars.
- Encourage administrators to use a variety of inservice strategies to train staff.
- Publicly reward administrators for proactive leadership, perhaps by presentation of an award.

Solicit support from community agencies

Effective interagency planning depends on the support and involvement of a wide range of local community agencies. Community-wide efforts to strengthen local interagency planning for transition reduces gaps in transition services and improves the quality of transition planning. Teachers can promote successful interagency collaboration by taking the following steps:

- Hold joint transition planning meetings that include several agencies. This reduces the number of meetings for a student and assures better interagency continuity.
- Get to know community agency representatives as people, not just services and dollars.
- Develop formal interagency agreements while continuing to individualize each student's transition plan.
- Recognize that each program or agency has limited resources on its own, but through collaborative efforts, resources can be combined and multiplied.
- Don't limit opportunities and options for students to services currently offered - design new services and means of support.

Include families in planning

Parents often have not been included as partners in the transition planning process. Several reasons may account for this lack of participation. First, many Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are completed prior to team meetings when parents most typically attend. Family members may also avoid involvement because expectations and options for participation are too rigid and they are intimidated by the expertise of school personnel. Family members may not participate in the IEP process because they are not perceived as, nor are they in actuality, equal and active contributors to decisions made regarding the educational needs of their child. Strategies teachers can use to involve family members include:

- Schedule meeting times when parents can attend. Teachers, rather than school secretaries, should call parents to confirm meeting times, review meeting agendas and answer any pre-meeting questions.
- IEP development must be a "planning" rather than merely a reporting process, incorporating parent ideas and impressions about their child's needs.
- Make information on adult community service agencies available to parents during IEP meetings. School staff should receive inservice training on the array of adult community services available and be capable of answering parent questions about these services.

Summary

The most important thing for teachers to remember is that they are not solely responsible for the lives of their students. What they are responsible for is the organization of a team of players who will assist the student in gaining the skills and supports necessary for a quality adult life.

Sandy Thompson is Coordinator of the Community Transition Interagency Committee Technical Assistance Project, a joint project of the University of Minesota's Institute on Community Integration and the Minnesota Department of Education's Interagency Office on Transition Services.

Four Faces of Successful Transition

These stories highlight four individuals who are successfully moving into their adult lives. Much of their success can be attributed to two factors: the opportunity to make personal choices, and a team of people (school, family, and agency) to support them in their choices. These stories are proof that transition planning works.

It hasn't happened over night, but it did happen for Raydene Mohn. She made a successful transition from school to work and adult life. For Minnesota's young adults with disabilities the partnership between schools, families, individuals, and service providers as mandated by the state's transition legislation has improved planning so that students are better prepared to enter the workforce and other aspects of community living.

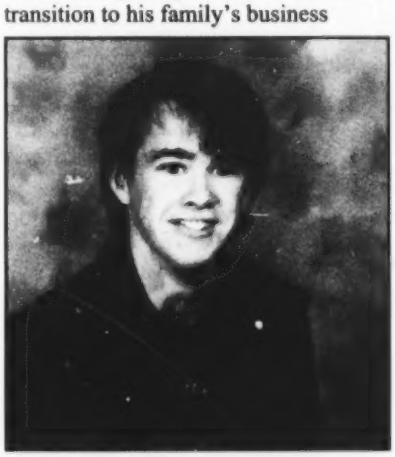
Through technical college training Raydene has become a nursing assistant.

That's what happened for Raydene Mohn. She received concentrated transition preparation while she was 18 to 21 years of age through VECTOR, a program for high school students with disabilities offered by Intermediate School District 287 at Hennepin Technical Colleges in Minneapolis. After two years of training to be a nursing assistant, and with the support of a technical tutor, she passed the state nursing assistant test, which has both a written and practical portion (the written portion was read to her).

While she was in training at the technical college she worked at a nursing home in the laundry with the assistance of a job coach. After passing the nursing assistant test Raydene took on new job responsibilities at the nursing home. She now makes beds, assists in transferring patients, and visits with the residents.

During the final year of school Raydene moved into her own apartment by herself. With the help of a semi-independent living program she improved on her cooking, developed a budget for paying for her needs and some of her wants, and learned how to shop at the local stores. She receives other forms of support as well, including financial support in the form of food stamps and medical assistance, and her apartment is subsidized. With the help of a counselor she sorts out the intricacies of interpersonal relationships. Occasionally, her social worker stops by and helps her fill out papers. And someone visits her at work to see how she is doing. And how is she doing at work? Well, she just got a raise.

As a junior in high school, Ben Peterson is getting the skills he needs to transition to his family's business through full-time participation in the post-secondary options program at the Austin Technical College in Austin, Minnesota. During the IEP conference his 10th grade year, the team discussed Ben's long term employment goal with the family business. A representative from the technical college came to a meeting to talk about the welding program and the supports available at the college to help Ben. With some modifications in the high school diploma requirements, home based instruction, and high school credit for the welding program, Ben is getting two years of training for future adult employment while in high school.



Ben, a high school junior, is training for adult work in his family's business.

It has been said by many parents that transition from childhood to adulthood is the most unsettling time for any family. We all have certain expectations for our sons and daughters: happiness, security, economic stability, friends, a nice home. For people with disabilities, reaching these goals requires a much more deliberate and systematic effort than the typical person. Karen Wells can attest to that.

Karen is the mother of Kathy Wells, a young woman with a developmental disability. Kathy, 22, has recently "transitioned" from high school to community living, and, by current educational standards, has done so quite successfully. Several key factors stand out as having impacted on this transition success story. The most obvious one is the vigilant manner in which Karen Wells sought information regarding services for her daughter.

Six years ago, when the Wells family was considering moving to Minnesota, Karen investigated the state's services by talking with a local ARC. Only after deciding that "Minnesota had good services and good ways to access them" did the Wells family

decide definitely to move here. After the move, Karen continued learning about Minnesota service systems, and participating in parent training opportunities such as case management training and supported employment training. This provided her with information and resources on key transition issues and strongly encouraged her to plan for her family's future.

Kathy's transition success is due in large part to her mother's involvement.

Also crucial in Kathy's transition process has been the fact that the professionals on her transition team were all actively involved and committed to interagency cooperation. Consequently, due to all of this interagency planning, key components were in place and there was no break between graduation from special education and the start of adult services.

Kathy currently works 35 hours a week at Blue Cross/Blue Shield in suburban St. Paul. She is part of a five person enclave and her role is to remove staples from insurance claims and route the individual papers to other offices. Kathy describes her job as "fun", "hard work", and "a nice place to work with lots of friends." Adult services are continuing to provide Kathy with the supports she needs. She is currently living in an apartment building that is licensed as an ICF-MR. There, she is learning skills which help her to be more independent.

Without the supports the Wells received during high school and since, Karen feels she would have had to work twice as hard at staying informed, and her daughter would have probably "had a lot more down-time, sitting at home a lot." She speaks positively of the involvement she has had with Kathy's teachers, counselors, and case managers: "I've seen real dedication with the limited resources they have." However, she is the first to admit that she cannot call it a wrap quite yet: "Transition will go on forever; it never really ends - it's a continual process. Parents' roles will change over time but they always have to stay involved."

Richard Kelly, who has had to face many obstacles due to his visual impairment, really exemplifies what can happen when a person takes control of their own planning. Richard will begin his sophmore year at the University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse this fall. When asked to describe himself, he is apt to suggest in his modest way that he is just an "average kid" who has always wanted to go to college. In talking further with him, he may also relate some of the difficulty that he has encountered because of his visual impairment and might also briefly describe the "anxiety problems" that caused him difficulty, especially during his junior year in high school.

Although his visual impairment is severe enough to qualify him as legally blind, he is not one to dwell on his problems. On the contrary, Richard is busy making sure he takes care of all the things that need to be done so that he can complete college and be successful in life. His interest in planning for the future has impressed those who've worked with him. While in high school he worked with a Work Experience Coordinator and developed a longitudinal career plan that reflected his personal life goals. They also worked together in the area of career exploration. In a short time Richard became very independent at completing the necessary steps in preparation for college. After he narrowed down his college choices, he made arrangements to visit

Richard, pictured here with a friend, has overcome many obstacles through his own perseverence and planning.

each campus and meet with the people who could provide him with assistance and support. To gain even further first hand experience, he arranged to sit in on some college classes.

In both high school and college, Richard learned to explore the available resources, and then use those valuable resources when needed. His independent nature, coupled with a tremendous amount of hard work and self-discipline, have proven to be a successful formula. During his freshman year, he earned a grade point average of 3.6 his first semester, and a perfect 4.0 the second semester. Although he only wrestled for one year during high school, Richard joined the wrestling team at college and enjoyed a very successful season.

When back in St. Paul during his college breaks, Richard has on several occasions volunteered his time and expertise to talk to high school students about his experiences. His positive attitude and eagerness to succeed have been an inspiration to students who face similar challenges.

Contributed by Stephanie Corbey, Transition Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education; Patricia Matuszak, Transition Coordinator, PACER Center, Minneapolis; and Ron Peterson, Work Experience Coordinator, St. Paul Public Schools.

Evaluation of Outcomes in Transition Programs

By Lizanne DeStefano

Most of us who work in the area of transition from school to adult life would agree that program evaluation plays an important role in the development and success of transition programs. The transition initiative carries with it many incentives to evaluate. First, federal legislation regarding transition includes considerable mandates to evaluate and report data at the state level on several variables related to the post school status of special education leavers. Second, the educational economy is such that special education is expected to expand services with no new dollars added for transition. If transition programs are going to effectively compete for their share of the special education budget, it will be necessary to demonstrate and make public the fact that these programs are achieving substantial outcomes that would not be possible in their absence. In many cases, transition is involved with convincing/coercing other individuals, agencies or systems to expand their roles, to offer new services, to include new populations, and to perceive individuals and their capabilities differently. These formidable tasks are made easier in the presence of credible data attesting to the effectiveness of a particular practice, program, or system of transition service delivery. Finally, the transition initiative is at a point in development where best practices are not yet well defined. Program evaluation is needed to identify, validate, and demonstrate the importance of transition practices.

While agreement might exist regarding the importance of evaluation, the field lacks consensus concerning the manner in which the evaluation is carried out. In a study of the evaluation practices of over 200 model demonstration projects in transition, researchers found tremendous diversity in the evaluation designs and reporting procedures in use across projects. Further, no relationship was found between these characteristics and perceived utility of the evaluation. These findings suggest that the form that evaluation should take is highly related to situational context and the purpose of the evaluation. While there may not be a single approach that works best in all circumstances, there are some issues to be considered that may influence the design, timing, reporting, and ultimate utility of the evaluation. These issues include 1) evaluation stakeholders; 2) transition outcomes; and 3) program effectiveness.

■ Accommodating multiple stakeholders

Effective transition is seldom accomplished by a single person or agency. The whole idea of transitioning from one place to another implies that there are at least two players involved. Evaluation in transition should reflect the input and participation of the agencies and individuals that already play a role in the transition process along with those who may be involved in the future. Participation may occur at several levels. In the most active sense, stakeholders may collaborate in the design of the evaluation, the selection of variables to be studied, the hiring of an external evaluator, the analysis and interpretation of data, and/or the dissemination of findings. Less active involvement might consist of routinely reporting preliminary findings to various stakeholders groups for comment and critique.

While the inclusion of multiple perspectives in evaluation requires additional time and effort, the benefits are considerable. The outcomes associated with transition and the targets of system change often are not associated with one agency. Evaluation designs that provide information that is valuable to multiple players facilitate interagency networking, long term planning, and coordinated policy making that are keystones of the transition process.

■ Transition outcomes

Outcomes associated with transition are complex and difficult to measure. At the individual level, transition is concerned with the adult adjustment of the student. Adult adjustment most often has been operationalized using quantitative indicators of employment status, independent living status, and involvement in postsecondary education. While these measures have proven useful in initial attempts to document the effects of transition, they are lacking in their ability to represent the global effects of transition on quality of life in terms of integration, self-determination, and lifestyle satisfaction. A second generation of transition evaluation demands better measures for assessing the impact of transition on the individual. Instruments for assessing lifestyle satisfaction, independence, and anticipated service needs represent recent advances in this area.

At the agency or system level, transition outcomes may take the form of increased interagency involvement, reduction in duplication of services, additional or differentiated staff roles, increased capacity for long term planning, development of new policy or procedures related to transition, or even something as difficult to measure as changes in attitudes among staff. Often, the process that was followed to achieve these changes is of as much interest as the extent of change itself. For this reason, nontraditional evaluation techniques that allow for rich description of context and process such as case studies are useful strategies for documenting transition outcomes at the agency level.

Finally, outcomes associated with transition do not necessarily occur during or shortly after participation in a

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The Next Step: Using Follow-Up Information to Guide Transition Planning

by Mary Fox Sinclair, David R. Johnson, and Richard Weatherman

In the past 15 years, follow-up studies have been used to reexamine the adult life adjustments of former high school students with special needs who previously had not been entitled to a public education. The reasons for conducting the follow-up studies vary from documenting the impact of the Education for Handicapped Children Act of 1975 to evaluating the effectiveness of a specific program or intervention. The most common post-school outcome examined is employment, for example, number of jobs since high school, current employment status, average annual earnings, and hours worked per week. The outcomes are typically analyzed for differences based on various student and programmatic characteristics, such as, gender, ethnicity, demography, handicapping condition, participation in a particular program or manner of exit from school. In general, the specific follow-up questions are determined by the primary purpose for conducting the study. More recent follow-up studies have broadened the perspective of adult adjustment and examined the degree to which people with disabilities are integrated in the adult community at large. The outcome variables frequently used to assess a person's community participation include general satisfaction, residential status, recreation and leisure activities, social interaction and support, financial stability, civic participation, and employment outcomes.

■ Need for transition services

The need to formalize and improve the services for youth with disabilities who are transitioning from school to work and community living was documented by follow-up studies in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Trends in the literature indicate the majority of youth with disabilities are underemployed or unemployed, living with their parents and otherwise financially unstable. Many youth with disabilities are also socially isolated and frustrated by the barriers that block access to daily participation in the community. The barriers include limited building accessibility, limited transportation options, inconsistent eligibility criteria for services, and the inability to obtain timely support from formal networks (county and state agencies that serve people with disabilities) and informal networks (family and generic services). Although most of the trends in post-school outcomes are somewhat negative for youth with special needs, there are some young adults who have met the challenges of life after high school with great success. These young adults have been able to achieve personally desired goals, such as, attending a community or technical college, living in an apartment with friends, or working full-time and earning full benefits.

■ Guiding planning with follow-up data

The primary utility of outcome data, whether positive or negative, is that it provides a general indication of program impact and effectiveness. However, general indicators are not sufficient enough in and of themselves to guide program improvement. The most informative portion of follow-up data is the "school experience" variable that tends to be associated with certain outcomes, especially those variables that can be manipulated by the school and adult service agencies, for example, curriculum emphasis or interagency and family involvement in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning process. The key to making follow-up data more useful is to regularly document the in-school experiences and transition processes of youth with special needs in relation to their post-school outcomes. Practitioners can then begin to develop an effective transition model by using the documented experiences of former special education students to guide transition planning and service delivery for current students. The system for documenting the transition process is generally referred to as a follow-along/follow-up system. Ideally, the system should be viewed as an ongoing method to enhance transition services rather than a one time evaluation, as are the majority of follow-up studies.

The data can be used by a community transition interagency committee to make broad scale plans or it can be used to guide individual planning activities. For example, follow-up interviews may reveal that 5 out of 10 former high school students with severe learning disabilities are students at local community and technical colleges. A secondary student with similar characteristics indicates this is a personal desire of hers during an IEP meeting. The IEP team could then examine the follow-along/follow-up information to see if those former students who went on to college had any common in-school experiences. It could be that those five students had someone from the college attend their high school IEP meeting and established a critical connection with the college prior to leaving high school. The interagency involvement should be investigated and considered for replication with current students. This is one example of how follow-along/follow-up information can be used systematically to provide effective transition services.

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Print and Media Resources on Transition

• **Students in Transition Using Planning.** (1988). By PACER Center. This manual outlines a training program on self-advocacy for students with disabilities and provides information on how to replicate the program. From PACER Center, 4826 Chicago Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55417 • (612)827-2966.

• **Minnesota Post-School Follow-Up System: Procedures Manual.** (1990). By D.R. Johnson and M.F. Sinclair. The manual contains a seven-step process, along with needed forms, to collect and report on post-school experiences of former students. System includes software. From Institute on Community Integration, 6 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455 • (612) 624-4848.

• **Issues and Guidelines in Designing Follow-up Systems for Special Education Service Programs (Report 89-2).** (1989). By R.H. Bruininks, C. Wolman, and M.L. Thurlow. This paper focuses on survey research techniques, which are widely used in investigation of the post-school adjustment for former students with handicaps. From Institute on Community Integration, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455 • (612) 624-4512.

• **Families Facing Transition**. By The Beach Center on Families and Disability. A videotape of a series of interviews with the parents of young people with disabilities. Discussions focus on the types of support the family feels will be necessary to assure their children's success in the community and what options are and are not available to them. From Beach Center on Families & Disability, University of Kansas, Bureau of Child Resources, 4318 Haworth Hall, Lawrence, KS 66045 • (913)864-7600.

• **Transition from School to Work for Persons with Disabilities.** (1988). By D. E. Berkell and J.M. Brown. Key issues in the transition process are addressed, with a review of how current practices and trends affect clients, professionals, and families. From Longman, Inc., 95 Church St., White Plains, NY 10601 • (800) 337-2226.

• **Interagency Planning for Transition in Minnesota: A Resource Guide**. (1990). By D.R. Johnson and S. J. Thompson. A comprehensive planning guide for Community Transition Interagency Committees. From Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 6 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455 • (612) 624-4848.

• **Community Transition Interagency Committees: Yearly Summary.** (1988, 1989, 1990). By D.R. Johnson and S.J. Thompson. Annual report on the status of community transition interagency committees in Minnesota. From Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 6 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55418 • 612-624-4848.

• **Transitions to Adult Life for People with Mental Retardation: Principles and Practices**. (1988). By B.L. Ludlow, A.P. Turnbull, and R. Luckasson. Contains "how-to" suggestions for designing, implementing, and evaluating transition programs for people with mental retardation. From Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285-0624 • (800) 638-3775.

• **Keymakers II: A Staff Development Program for Minnesota Technical College Educators**. (1989). By A. Grasso-Ryan. A training program to familiarize instructors within the Minnesota Technical College System with the educational and support needs of students with learning disabilities. From Minnesota Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities, 1821 University Avenue, Suite 494-N, St. Paul, MN 55104 • (612) 646-6136.

• **Rural Transition Strategies That Work**. (1988). By American Council on Rural Special Education. Designed to assist rural educators in establishing rural transition programs, this manual provides descriptions of over 50 exemplary transition programs, strategies, and practices tested in rural areas. From National Rural Account, National Rural Development Institute, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225.

• **Opening the Doors to Independent Living**. (1988). By S. Anderson. Designed to provide guidance to people with physical disabilities in areas found to be the most difficult in the transition to community living. From Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, 1619 Dayton Avenue, Suite 303, St. Paul, MN 55104.

• **What's Working in Interagency Planning for Transition**. By Institute on Community Integration. A quarterly newsletter containing ideas, practices, and strategies for and from Community Transition Interagency Committees in Minnesota. From Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455 • (612) 624-4512.

Additional information on transition practices and materials is available from Sandy Thompson, Coordinator, Community Transition Interagency Committee Technical Assistance Project, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, at (612)624-4848. Information on transition materials is also available from the Minnesota Curriculum Services Center at (612)483-4442 or (800)652-9024.

Minnesota, continued from page 5

of training, technical assistance, and research activities has been undertaken to improve transition services available to youth with disabilities and their families. Selected examples of these activities are highlighted below.

Efforts of State and Local Agencies

- Since 1987, the Minnesota Department of Education has provided funds to a specialized technical assistance project within the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration to support the ongoing activities of Community Transition Interagency Committees statewide.
- The Minnesota Department of Education, in collaboration with the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota, has developed a statewide follow-up system designed to obtain information on the postschool outcomes of former special education students.
- The Minnesota Department of Education has developed a special training program — Project Invest — designed to prepare a cadre of professionals to work in a consultative capacity in all regions of Minnesota and provide training and technical assistance on interagency planning and transition services.
- The Divisions of Special Education and Vocational Education at the Minnesota Department of Education have collaboratively funded transition support service facilitator positions in key locations in the state.
- PACER Center in Minneapolis is presently engaged in a three-year, federally funded (OSERS) project designed to improve the transition of youth with disabilities from school to work and community living through improved family networking and support processes.
- Northeast Metropolitan Intermediate School District #916 recently concluded a 3 year, federally funded (OSERS) demonstration project designed to improve the transition of youth with severe disabilities from school to work.

There are numerous other examples of important state and local efforts undertaken in recent years to improve transition services throughout Minnesota. The examples provided here merely illustrate the range of activities undertaken to support professionals and parents statewide.

Institute on Community Integration

In addition to the afore-mentioned collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Education, the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota is actively involved in an extensive program of training, technical assistance, and research on transition. Selected examples of these activities include:

- **Secondary Education Specialist Training Program**, training educators to enhance the secondary education and employment opportunities of students with mild to profound disabilities and their transition into the workforce.
- **Minnesota Technical Assistance Resource Network on Supported Employment**, forming a statewide network of technical assistance resources addressing needs of supported employment service providers.
- **Drop-out Prevention Model Programs**, demonstrating strategies and services for students, school, and family support to promote retention, performance, and school adjustment.
- **Special Education-Vocational Education Cooperative Planning System**, designed to improve the quality of planning between special education and vocational education professionals in the development of school programs, policies, and individual services to youth with disabilities throughout Minnesota.
- **Secondary Transition Follow-along/Follow-up System**, developing a comprehensive monitoring system and using information gained through the system to improve district-wide transition services and interagency planning.
- **Promoting Formal and Informal Social Relationships**, studying the role of social networks in motivation, retention, employability, and community living of youth people with disabilities and promoting those networks.
- **Postsecondary Vocational Education Dropout Studies**, assessing the organizational, community, and individual factors related to student retention and adjustment in postsecondary vocational education programs.

Conclusion

The accomplishments and progress made to date in Minnesota are truly a collective effort, involving many people who have worked hard and in earnest to improve transition services statewide. There is in our state a positive climate for change, and the momentum achieved in recent years continues. We value and prize our accomplishments, but also recognize that much still remains to be done. To this end, we shall continue to evolve and improve transition policies, programs, and practices statewide.

David R. Johnson is Associate Director for Exemplary Services with the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. Stephanie Corbey is Transition Specialist with the Minnesota Department of Education.

Transition, continued from page 1

■ What is Transition?

Transition is a concept that has been used to describe a variety of changes or shifts that occur throughout the lifespan of persons with disabilities. For purposes of clarity, the high school to adult life transition is the focus of this article. From this more restricted perspective, transition was described originally as a school to work related issue and defined in a 1984 U.S. Department of Education Report as "... an outcome oriented process encompassing a broad array of services that lead to employment." This conceptualization of transition was quickly expanded to incorporate a broader emphasis on post-school adjustment, including employment, community living, and social-interpersonal networking. With very few exceptions, the more comprehensive lifestyle orientation to transition planning and service delivery has been accepted. Representative of this viewpoint is the Illinois Transition Project's definition of transition as a dynamic process involving a partnership of consumers, school-age services, post-school services, and local communities that results in maximum levels of employment, independent living, integration, and community participation.

■ State Legislative Developments

Massachusetts' "Turning 22" legislation was one of the first state laws passed in response to the federal priority in support of transition planning. However, this legislation was restricted to persons with more severe handicaps and only required the documentation of a transition plan and the formal assignment of a responsible agency beyond school exit. Although a Bureau of Transition Planning was established through this legislation, this law did not address the longitudinal transition planning needs of a more heterogeneous secondary student population or the need for the development of more effective transition services to meet the unique lifestyle support needs of these students. In contrast, Minnesota's legislation is representative of a broader, more comprehensive approach for addressing the complexity of issues that are associated with transition from school to adult life. Through legislation, Minnesota established an Interagency Office on Transition Services, mandated that local districts establish Community Transition Interagency Committees, and required that transition needs be fully addressed for all high school youth with disabilities as part of their IEPs. The state, community, and individual conceptualization of transition planning that has been adopted by Minnesota has been used as a model by other states.

Illinois, as one such state, modeled its 1990 legislation (Senate Bill 1840) after Minnesota with the exception that responsibilities for specific activities were shared between agencies. For example, special education assumed primary responsibility for conducting transition planning in conjunction with the IEP meeting, the Department of Rehabilitation Services was assigned responsibility for organizing local transition planning committees, and an Interagency Coordinating Council was authorized for coordinating the overall state initiative. By incorporating interagency responsibility directly into the state legislation, Illinois has established a precedent of shared investment that promotes cooperative problem solving related to the many issues that are involved in the transition from school to adult life.

■ Critical Issues

More comprehensive and sophisticated approaches to transition planning have evolved over the past several years. As evidenced in the state legislation from Minnesota and Illinois, these approaches have involved individual planning, community organization, and state level interagency coordination. Critical issues related to these aspects of transition planning are highlighted below, including consumer involvement in individual planning, community needs assessment, and resource allocation.

• **Consumer involvement**. The student and his/her family are the most important partners in the transition planning process. Specific activities for promoting consumer involvement should be used routinely as part of individualized transition planning. For example personal futures planning could be used with students to identify desired lifestyle goals and parental questionnaries could be administered to families to facilitate meaningful input. Transition planning meetings should be scheduled to accomodate the family and should always include the student, regardless of the severity level of the disability. During transition planning meetings, the student and family need to be encouraged to express their personal lifestyle goals and needed services. If a student does not communicate in a conventional manner for any reason, his/her participation is still essential. A person's presence in the room establishes a reality context that words and paper documentation seldom communicate and promotes the development of personal commitments to meeting the unique lifestyle goals of the full diversity of students.

• **Community needs assessment**. In the absence of an adult service mandate similar to PL 94-142, attention needs to be directed to the most effective means for influencing the development of needed services. One of the most logical, yet often overlooked, methods for promoting the development of needed services is to increase awareness of what people need to attain their post-school goals. This awareness can be enhanced by the collection of community needs assessment information regarding those resources and services that are perceived as important for individuals to work, live, and socially participate in their home communities. Community needs assessment that identifies the transition services required for persons with disabilites to pursue

their life ambitions is a strategy for promoting local systems change in support of more dignifying adult outcomes. Without such a strategy, too many individuals are forced to accept the limited menu of options that awaits them upon school exit. Community needs assessment is an important step toward the creation of a new menu of opportunities.

• **Resource allocations**. The individual transition needs that are identified through the planning process will result in the identification of community services that are required for some individuals to fully participate in integrated communty activites. In some cases these services will be available and in others they may not. Unfortunately, the allocation of resources in support of various community services is rarely dictated by consumer need or desire, but is commonly influenced by past practice or tradition. However, the accumulation of transition needs assessment data across several communities creates a new information base on which systems may make more appropriate decisions. For example, transition needs assessment data may support the expansion of supported employment resources for persons with more severe disabilities and the creation of extensive support programs for persons with mild disabilities who wish to pursue higher education. The interagency coordination that has been enhanced through transition planning should result in much greater exchange of information related to the need for specific services and should encourage resource allocation that is far more sensitive to the lifestyle goals of persons experiencing disabilities.

■ "Best Practice Guidelines"

The development of transition planning practices has moved beyond the debate stage regarding whether or not it is a good idea and has moved on to discussions regarding how best it can be operationalized in local communities. Cooperative planning, appropriate curriculum, post-school options, interagency collaboration, and data-based decision making are a few of the interrelated principles that comprise effective transition plannning. These principles are presented below in a series of questions that are intended to be used as a self evaluation of a program's adherence to "best practice" guidelines:

- Did you involve parents and/or guardians in transition planning throughout high school?
- Did you involve the student in his/her transition planning throughout high school?
- Did you involve an interdisciplinary group of school staff in transition planning?
- Did you involve non-school agencies, services, and other community resources in transition planning?
- Did you provide an appropriate high school curriculum including content designed to improve your students' participation in employment, post-secondary education, community living, and social-interpersonal situations?
- Did you participate in cooperative training with community agencies, services, and other resources related to transition planning and service delivery?
- Did you participate in a local transition planning committee with school, post-school, and consumer representatives?
- Did you prepare and share transition needs assessment reports, including transition goals, needed services, and follow-up results?
- Did your students attain their personally desired transition goals at school exit (including employment, post-secondary education, community living, and social-interpersonal) and maintain this status at follow-up?

■ Conclusion

As transition planning becomes more formally established in federal and state rules and regulations, it is important to maintain the spirit of the transition initiative. Meaningful lifestyle enhancement is the yardstick by which all transition planning initiatives must be judged. Transition planning should be viewed as an opportunity for persons with disabilities to share their visions and dreams for the future with the community of others who are in a position to contribute to the realization of these visions and dreams. Transition planning encourages us to focus on those challenges that must be addressed for dreams to become realities. Transition is an energizing concept that assists communitites in becoming more accomodating and supportive of the unique needs of all citizens. It is an opportunity that the human service professionals cannot afford to lose.

Paul Bates is Professor of Special Education at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

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give students actual hands-on experience in a career area in which they have shown some interest. Through it students learn the math, English, social skills, and other basic skills for a minimum of 31 different careers.

The successes of the Minnesota Valley Cooperative Center and Granite Falls Schools program have gained attention outside the immediate area. The program has been visited by a number of school districts during the past two years, as well as special education coordinators and transition consultants. It is perceived that through the components described in this article, students with disabilities, even in a rural area, can receive the assessment, the hands-on instruction, and the community integration experiences necessary to a complete vocational education program.

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transition program. For that reason, many conventional evaluation designs are not sensitive to the true outcomes of the programs. Longitudinal designs that follow cohorts of individuals throughout a program and for several years into adult life seem most effective for this type of study. Unfortunately, these designs can be quite costly and require a great deal of prior planning. Additonally, it is often not feasible or wise to have to wait a year or more for evaluation data. Realistically, evaluation designs that incorporate both cross-sectional and longitudinal techniques have the most value for meeting immediate information needs and providing in depth understanding of the outcomes associated with transition.

■ Program effectiveness

The idea of effectiveness carries with it the notion that participation in a program should produce greater effects, and should achieve effects faster or at less cost, than nonparticipation or participation in an alternative program. In order for this comparison to be made, data must be available on a comparable group that has received no services or alternate services. In some cases this control group may naturally exist in a neighboring school or community. Historical data on the status of students before the program existed is sometimes sufficient. The use of data from national and statewide followup studies may also be appropriate for these types of comparisons. In any case, consideration of evaluation needs and the presence of a non-equivalent control group are important apriori activities that should accompany all evaluations of program effectiveness. Without a sound basis for comparison, it is impossible to make a true judgement of effectiveness.

The next decade presents imposing challenges to education and human services. Static budgets and rising costs create a climate in which only the strongest and most well-advocated programs will survive. Stronger federal legislation will increase the likelihood of transition remaining vital at the federal level. Stronger program evalution may be critical for the maintenance and growth of transition in states and localities.

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• Efforts to improve the success of transition-enhancement processes require collaborative efforts by school and community-based service providers and advocates.

• For learners with special needs to be successfully retained in vocational training programs until they develop the skills necessary to become meaningfully employed adults, postsecondary vocational educators and school/community support service providers should exert leadership and play proactive roles in preparing, planning, and delivering transition-enhancement systems.

• Assessment Processes for Student-Retention Systems

Student-retention systems that focus on students with unique learning needs should provide a comprehensive array of assessment services. The initial stage of assessment efforts should use formal instruments such as the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) to assess all entering students' abilities related to reading comprehension and numerical skills. This broad effort to evaluate all students' in regard to these basic skills is the first step toward identifying those entering students whose educational performance may place them "at-risk." The next phase of assessment strategies should add the following assessment components to existing practices:

• A structured interview process that can provide an early indication of each student's generalizable skill levels. Such early identification will maximize students' chances of correcting, compensating for, and/or circumventing these generalizable skill deficits or problems caused by the deficits.

• The use of a learning styles inventory to help match instructional materials and strategies with the nature of each student's learning styles. Each student's learning style profile, and the instructional implications of the nature of that profile, should be explained to them and their instructors, as well.

• The use of informal inventories and checklists and other educationally relevant assessment strategies should also be employed. (Note: These strategies should serve as the conceptual framework upon which structured interview processes are based.)

• In addition to institution-wide assessments conducted before students' entry into instructional programs, it is essential that counselors or admissions personnel use reliable, valid, and structured interviews to collect information that can be used to advise new students about the feasibility of their program choices and provide them with Individualized Technical Education Plans that will maximize their chances to successfully attain their educational goals. Interviews should focus on students in terms of their mathematical skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, reasoning skills, management of time, ability to retain information, physical abilities, satisfaction with their training programs, satisfactoriness as a student, and type/level of motivation to participate in and complete their vocational training programs.

The concepts presented here represent powerful tools for educators seeking to improve their schools' abilities to quickly and effectively identify potential students with special needs and to accommodate them in ways that will maximize their chances to attain their educational and career goals. Educators are encouraged to examine these concepts and explore ways to apply them in their own educational settings.

James M. Brown is Associate Professor of Vocational Technical Education at the University of Minnesota.

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■ Minnesota Follow-Along/ Follow-Up System

In the state of Minnesota, approximately 5,750 students with disabilities graduate or otherwise exit their high school programs each year. Many professionals are asking what they, as educators and community service agency personnel, can do to improve the effectiveness and quality of school programs and transition planning efforts. In answer to this concern, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) awarded one of fourteen secondary transition follow-along/follow-up system grants (Grant #H158R80022) to the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration. These grants represent a federal initiative to identify and demonstrate effective transition models. The emphasis of the Minnesota project is to develop a computerized model that facilitates the use of information about the transition experiences of former students in the planning process and service delivery for current students with disabilities.

■ Establishing the follow-up component

Most schools already document information on student characteristics (gender, handicapping condition, age, attendance, socio-economic status), school policies (suspension, promotion, attendance) and student's school program experiences (coursework, IEP goals and objectives, level of service, service site). The component that most schools are not documenting on a regular basis is the post-school follow-up information. The Minnesota Post-School Follow-Up System is a new resource tool also developed by the Institute and the Minnesota Department of Education's Unique Learner Needs Section. The system is designed to provide schools and local communities across the state with the resources to collect information on the post-school experiences of former special education students. The Follow-Up System has three basic components: (1) the procedures manual, (2) data collection forms, and (3) the Follow-Up System software. The procedures manual describes a seven step process on how to collect and report on the post-school experiences of former students. It is written primarily for the local staff member assigned the responsibility of collecting the follow-up information. All the data collection forms needed to conduct the follow-up study are included in copy-ready form. The main data collection form, the High School Follow-Up Survey, briefly explores five areas of community living: employment, post-secondary training and education, recreation and leisure, community participation and residential outcomes. The record review form is then used to centralize minimal information on student characteristics and program experiences. The questions pertaining to the program experiences, as well as the post school outcomes, parallel the five transition need areas identified by the Minnesota Department of Education. The Follow-Up System Software is designed to manage the data and to report on the post-school outcomes at the local level. Software packages are available for IBM, Macintosh and Apple.

■ Conclusion

The 1990's will be the decade that we begin to identify effective transition practices. We can only improve our ability to do so by systematically documenting the in-school and post-school experiences of youth in transition from school to work and community living. It is recommended that local communities interested in collecting information on a regular basis use a follow-up system that has already been developed and field tested. Rather than exhaust resources on the development of the survey and follow-up procedures, it is most productive for schools and adult service agencies to concentrate efforts on collecting the outcome data and utilizing the information to plan and provide more effective transition services for youth with disabilities.

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Tracey, continued from page 3

way for Tracey by advocating a continued search for the best placement that would promote Tracey's independence. Another important team member that attended those IEP meeting discussions was a representative from an adult vocational support service. Staff members from the service attended the IEP meetings and learned about Tracey's varied vocational experiences, strengths, limitations, likes and dislikes. They were responsible for Tracey's current 20 hour/week employment at a local restaurant.

Before I left, Tracey asked me if I'd like to see her bedroom. I gladly accepted. She directed me to her bulletin board. Pinned to it were school pictures, a post card and snapshots of family and friends. "This is my nephew here, and over here is my boyfriend; he's at Disneyworld in this picture. Have you been there Diane? That's what I'd like to do some day, I'd like to go to Disneyworld. I'll have to talk to my mom and dad about that".

As I drove away I thought to myself, she's made it. For Tracey, it worked and it can work. All of the people who came together in the early stages to help prepare her for the road ahead have made her story a success story. With Tracey's determination and ability we shouldn't be surprised if we do see her at Disneyworld someday.

Diane Bisping is a work trainer for Northeast Metropolitan Intermediate School District 916 in White Bear Lake, a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota.

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IMPACT

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